

# Mahāyāna Sūtra of Consciousness Revealed

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in the Tang Dynasty  
by  
The [Tripitaka](#) Master [Divākara](#)

## Fascicle 1 (of 2)

Thus I have heard:

At one time the [Bhagavān](#) was in the Karaṇḍa Bamboo Garden of the capital city [[Rājagṛha](#)], together with a multitude of 1,250 great [bhikṣus](#). All of them were [Arhats](#), who, with no more [afflictions](#), had ended their [discharges](#) and acquired self-mastery. With their minds totally liberated and their wisdom fully unfolded, like the [great dragon](#), they illuminated the past, future, and present without obstructions. Taught by the [Buddha](#), they had accomplished their undertaking [for Arhatship] and shed the enormous heavy burden. They had acquired benefits for themselves, having finished transmigrating through life and death and ended [suffering](#) through existence. With the power of true knowledge, they were adept in identifying the proclivities of sentient beings. At the head of the multitude of such great [voice-hearers](#) was the Elder Śāriputra. The assembly also included an innumerable multitude of [Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas](#).

At that time the bhikṣus, at the place where the [World-Honored One](#) was, were tired and drowsy, losing their color and too exhausted to hold up. Then the face of the World-Honored One lit up like a blooming lotus blossom. Forthwith the bhikṣus all became alert, each straightening up and thinking this thought: "The Buddha-Bhagavān now looks resplendent, his face glowing with light. What [Dharma-eye](#) will He open to give us great benefits?"

At that time the youth Worthy Protector Superior, complete with fine qualities such as robust good looks, gentleness, and radiance, surrounded by 60,000 merchant lords, together with attendants, came with rumbling sounds like an earthquake to the place where the Buddha was. Seeing the Buddha-Bhagavān silent and peaceful as the [store](#) of virtues, and majestic and radiant like a towering golden tree, he pondered as he joined his palms with profound faith and reverence. He had this thought: "As praised by all, the Buddha, who is all-knowing and all-seeing, is truly the [Tathāgata](#), Arhat, [Samyak-Sambuddha](#). It is not false."

He bowed his head down at the feet of the Buddha and then gazed at Him. The Buddha saw Worthy Protector and radiated light from His entire body to shine on him. Worthy Protector then acquired fearlessness. He circumambulated

the Buddha three times, and again bowed his head down at the Buddha's feet. He said to the Buddha, "I pray only that the World-Honored One will teach me with compassion. It is only today that I have acquired pure faith at the place where the Buddha is. My mind longing for the wondrous [Dharma](#), I would like to ask questions. However, I have long been in the cycle of life and death, drowning in afflictions and chaotic thoughts. I have no invisible provisions such as observance of precepts or other good [karma](#). Anxious as I am, I do not know how to transcend life and death and be delivered from this net of stupidity, affliction, and doubt. The World-Honored One is all-knowing and all-seeing. The appearance of the Buddha in the world is rare and hard to encounter. As a wish-fulfilling jewel can give happiness to sentient beings, the Buddha is the greatest wish-fulfilling jewel. All sentient beings need to depend upon the Buddha to acquire great peace and bliss. He is the great parent and the root of goodness of sentient beings. Because of the Buddha-parent, one will be able see the right path. I pray only that, out of sympathy, You will remove my doubts and darkness."

The Buddha said to Worthy Protector, "You may ask anything about your doubts. I will resolve them separately for you."

At that time Worthy Protector, having received the Buddha's permission, stood on one side, to concentrate on his questions. Meanwhile, the Elder Ānanda, seeing the radiance and good features of the youth Worthy Protector, said to the Buddha, "A sight never encountered before! This youth Worthy Protector has great merit, whose radiance and glow outshine the awesome appearances of kings."

The Buddha told Ānanda, "This youth Worthy Protector Superior, because of his meritorious karma, enjoys a splendid heaven-reward while living in the human world. He can frolic and enjoy peace and pleasure totally at will just like the god-king [Śakra](#). No one in [Jambudvīpa](#) can compare with him, except for the youth Moon Reality."

Ānanda requested the Buddha, "I pray only that You will tell us about the youth Worthy Protector, concerning his current resources as karmic reward and the [good roots](#) he has planted in the past."

The Buddha told Ānanda, "You should now hear the pleasure reward in the form of enormous resources that Worthy Protector now enjoys and learn the contributing causes from his past. Ānanda, this youth Worthy Protector is attended by 60,000 merchant lords who have an abundance of assets and an accumulation of gold and jewels. They respectfully accept his instructions and follow him at his service. [In his residence, there are] 60,000 beds with well-arranged beddings, blankets, fine linens, and pillows, in various colors, beautiful

and magnificent. All around are columns, jeweled carvings, colorful silk curtains, and other decorations, as gorgeous as a painting. There are 60,000 artistic playmates, dressed in silk in a variety of colors, adorned with golden jewelry and necklaces in dazzling colors, which are so fine and delicate to the touch that they are like celestial crystal. Their weight can be light or heavy, suiting the wearer's mood. Playing, laughing, talking, singing, these ladies entertain and serve their master with gentleness, discreetness, and respect. They cease their love and desire for others, lowering their heads with humility or covering their heads for modesty. Their skin is fine, soft, and smooth. The bony joints of their hands, feet, and ankles do not show. Their teeth are white and straight, without gaps, and their black hair curls to the right, like shredded wax, as if rendered in a painting. They come from families and clans with names known far and wide. Such women are his attendants. Moreover, there are 60,000 women who serve him food. There are rice, bread, and so forth, in various colors. The aromas and flavors are as wonderful as those of celestial food. Such food, a reward for merit, arrives as he wishes, cooked without labor. The water there has the [eight virtues](#), pleasing to one's mind and soothing to one's body, and it cleanses filth and removes diseases.

"His mansions and towers are adorned with 60,000 jewels such as precious beads and [vaidūrya](#), hanging down or beautifully arranged. Bells suspended from ribbons jingle harmoniously in the winds. The ground is like vaidūrya, showing myriads of reflections, with various flowers scattered around. [The place] is cool and pleasant, inviting leisurely strolls to relax one's mind. There are musical instruments such as paṇava drums, sitars, pipes, and brass cymbals, playing 60,000 kinds of melodies. The beautiful sounds are harmonious and loud, resonating far and wide. Joy and happiness brought by meritorious karma flow non-stop. Doves and other birds are flying around, their various calls enjoyable to one's mind and pleasant to one's ear. Flowering vines climb up on the towers, adorning them with bright flowers and lush leaves. The tones of bells and musical instruments sound like those in a celestial palace. The halls are spacious like a cavern of Mount Sumeru, where divine medicine flows.

"There are 60,000 cities graced with towers and surrounded by high walls. The streets are well designed with crossroads to reach all directions. Adding to the magnificence are people who come from everywhere, wearing various kinds of clothing, speaking various kinds of languages. They have different features and follow diverse customs. Hundreds of thousands of merchants display their extraordinary goods. The raucous sounds of trade shake the entire city. In the lush gardens and forests are large and small trees, with vines, medicinal herbs, and flowers in full bloom. [In their midst are pools,] the clear waters of which reflect shimmering light, like a sheet of colorful brocade. Hundreds and thousands of elephants, horses, and carriages move endlessly throughout the city. Ānanda, in these 60,000 cities, all the nobility and the famous as well as the

wealthy and the merchant lords praise the youth Worthy Protector every day, broadcasting his virtues. They respectfully join their palms and make obeisance to him in reverence.

"Prasenajit, the king of Kośala, is wealthy because of the power of his merit, but he is poor in comparison with Worthy Protector. The youth Moon Reality is surrounded by hundreds of thousands of skilled attendants, serving him respectfully and entertaining him with music and frolic. Even the god-king Śakra is hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of times less fortunate than Moon Reality. On the other hand, the youth Worthy Protector, with his robust, high-colored good looks, wealth, ease, peace, and pleasures, is hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of times less fortunate than Moon Reality. Their fortune, in each case, is not acquired by force, but a response to their past merit.

"Ānanda, the youth Worthy Protector has a wish-fulfilling carriage inlaid with celestial jewels, radiating bright light like celestial gold or [vajra](#). It is decorated with various kinds of treasures, mixed as beautifully as stars. It moves speedily, like the wind, like the flight of the golden-winged bird. Riding this jeweled carriage, he arrives at any treasure continent on a thought. Then he comes home from his pleasure tour, not tired."

At that time Ānanda bowed down at the feet of the Buddha. He asked the Buddha, "What good roots did the youth Worthy Protector plant and what meritorious karma did he perform, to own now enormous assets and to enjoy the great pleasure reward, living in such magnificent mansions decorated with extraordinary treasures?"

The Buddha told Ānanda, "The youth Worthy Protector, because he planted in the past meritorious karma in the Buddha Dharma, has now acquired this enormous pleasure reward. In the past, there was a Buddha named Blissful Light, who was the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-Sambuddha, Knowledge and Conduct Perfected, Sugata, Understanding the World, Unsurpassed One, Tamer of Men, Teacher to Gods and Humans, Buddha the World-Honored One. At that time Worthy Protector renounced family life and became a bhikṣu, called Dharma Topknot, in the Dharma of that Buddha. He was inadequate in observance of the [precepts](#) for conduct. However, he clearly understood the profound teachings in the [Tripitaka](#)—the Sūtras, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma—and he excelled in expounding them. He always pronounced the teachings to sentient beings in solemn, beautiful tones, endlessly giving the Dharma as alms. He was forthright and brilliant in his eloquent exposition, and the hearers delighted in the Dharma they heard. They pondered and trained themselves accordingly, and those who saved themselves from trekking the evil [life-journeys](#) were innumerable. Ānanda, the bhikṣu Dharma Topknot, because of his virtue of giving the Dharma, was reborn as a god for 90 [kalpas](#), enjoying his reward. In addition, when Dharma

Topknot saw thin and frail bhikṣus who were observing their precepts purely, he always gave them food, drink, shoes, and so forth. Because he gave alms courteously and sincerely with a pure mind, he now has received this pleasure reward in the form of great wealth and enjoyment of magnificent mansions and extraordinary jeweled carriages. Furthermore, Dharma Topknot later came across Kāśyapa Tathāgata, who gave him teachings and guidance and told him, 'You will receive a prophecy from the future Buddha Śākyamuni.' Hence, he is seeing me now, and I will pronounce the Dharma to him to bring him to maturity."

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "The youth Worthy Protector Superior has command of such an abundance of riches, gold, and treasures. It is extraordinary that he is gentle and modest, without any pride or arrogance."

The Buddha said, "Ānanda, one with great wisdom does not become arrogant because of wealth, treasures, and sensory pleasures. Worthy Protector has long trained in the [good deeds](#). Supported by good dharmas, he always has fortune fruits to eat."

Worthy Protector, having been praised by the Buddha and Ānanda, joined his palms reverently and bowed down at the feet of the Buddha. He asked the Buddha, "Please pity, welcome, and protect all sentient beings. I pray that You will permit me to ask a few questions."

The Buddha told Worthy Protector, "You have my permission. You may ask me about all of your doubts. I will clear them up for you."

Worthy Protector said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, although sentient beings know that there is consciousness, it is like a jewel kept in a box, unrevealed and unknowable. World-Honored One, I do not know the shape of this consciousness, nor the reason why it is called consciousness. When a person dies, his hands and feet may convulse, and the look of his eyes changes uncontrollably. When the sense organs perish, the [great domains](#) separate. Where does consciousness go after it has left the current body? What is its self-nature? What is its form? How does it assume the next body after leaving this body? After this body is abandoned, how does consciousness carry the sense faculties in order to accept the next requital, which can be one of many kinds of bodies? World-Honored One, how does a sentient being grow new sense organs after the expiration of this body? Why does one accumulate meritorious karma in this life, only to receive the requital in the next life? The current body does meritorious deeds, and the next body will eat [the fruit]. How does consciousness nourish the body and keep it alive? How do consciousness and sense faculties develop according to the body?"

The Buddha said, "Very good! Very good! Worthy Protector, these are good questions. Hearken! Hearken! Ponder well. I will explain to you."

Worthy Protector said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, affirmatively I accept your teachings."

The Buddha told Worthy Protector, "The process and transference of [\[ālaya\]](#) consciousness are like the great wind element, which is formless, shapeless, and unidentifiable. However, wind can activate myriads of things and display myriads of conditions, whether making loud sounds as it shakes the forest or breaks off branches, whether causing pleasure or pain as it touches with cold or hot the bodies of sentient beings. Wind does not have hands, feet, face, or shape. Nor does it have various colors such as black, white, red, or yellow. Worthy Protector, the realm of consciousness is the same way. It is formless, shapeless, not shown by light. However, because of causes and conditions, it can manifest various kinds of functions. We know that the dharma realms of sensory reception and perception are also formless and shapeless. Because of causes and conditions, they manifest functions. Worthy Protector, after a sentient being dies, the dharma realms of sensory reception and perception and the dharma realm of consciousness abandon the body and leave. The way [\[ālaya\]](#) consciousness carries the dharma realms of sensory reception and perception to accept another body is like a gust of wind sweeping across wonderful flowers. The flowers stay put, but their fragrance will flow afar. The wind-essence does not grasp the fragrance of the flowers. Fragrance and wind are both, in substance, formless and shapeless. However, without the power of wind, fragrance will not travel afar. Worthy Protector, after a person's death, his [\[ālaya\]](#) consciousness carries the dharma realms of sensory reception and perception to the next life, which is conditioned upon the parents chosen by [\[ālaya\]](#) consciousness. In this way, the dharma realms of sensory reception and perception accompany consciousness. Because of the quality of the flowers, one's nose can detect their scent. Because of one's olfactory power, one smells fragrance, a sense object. Wind touches the flowers because of its power. Because of the power of the wind, fragrance can reach afar. Likewise, from consciousness one has sensory reception, from sensory reception one has perception, and from perception one has mental objects. Then one knows good and evil.

"Worthy Protector, by analogy, a painter applies pigments to the wall, and he can paint images as neatly and properly as he wishes. The consciousness and intellect of the painter are both formless and shapeless, but they can create various kinds of extraordinary images and shapes. Thus consciousness and mind project the [six percepts](#). That is, the eye sees sights and the eye consciousness is shapeless; the ear hears sounds, which are formless and shapeless; the nose detects odors, which are formless and shapeless; the tongue tastes flavors, which are formless and shapeless; and the body knows tactile sensations, which



are formless and shapeless. Sense faculties and object perception are shapeless. In the same way, consciousness is formless and shapeless.

"Worthy Protector, [ālaya] consciousness abandons one's current body to accept another life, but it is still fettered by karma-hindrances at the moment of one's death. When one's current requital ends with death, [one's consciousness] is as if in the [Samādhi](#) of Extinction. When an Arhat enters the Samādhi of Extinction, his [sixth] consciousness is totally suspended. Thus, when the consciousness of the dying one abandons the body and its spheres, it does so with the power of memory. Upon dying, one's consciousness replays clearly from memory all the events in one's entire life. Both body and mind are under stress.

"Worthy Protector, what is the meaning of consciousness? [ālaya] consciousness means seed, which can sprout a karmic body of various sorts. Also, perception, thinking, and memory are all sprouted from [ālaya] consciousness. It is called consciousness because it knows suffering, pleasure, good, and evil, as well as good and evil objects. You ask me how [ālaya] consciousness leaves this body to accept the next requital. Worthy Protector, the transference of consciousness into a body is like the reflection of a face in a mirror, like the markings in the mud, imprinted by a stamp. As an analogy, the light of sunrise removes darkness, which returns after sunset. Darkness has no mass, no shape, neither permanent nor impermanent, but it is always there. Consciousness is the same way. Having no mass and no shape, it is revealed through sensory reception and perception. Consciousness in one's body is like the essence of darkness, which cannot be seen or held. It is like the fetus inside the mother who does not know whether it is a body or a girl. Nor does she know whether it looks black, white, or yellow, whether it has complete sense organs, whether it has normal hands, feet, ears, and eyes. However, stimulated by hot food and drink [eaten by the mother], the fetus will move, because it perceives pain. The presence of consciousness is evident as sentient beings come or go, bend or extend, stare or blink, speak or laugh, carry heavy loads, or perform deeds. However, they do not know the whereabouts of consciousness in their bodies, nor its shape. Worthy Protector, the self-nature of consciousness permeates the sensory fields, but is not defiled by them. Consciousness permeates the six sense organs, six sense objects, and the [five aggregates](#), which are with afflictions, but is not defiled by them. Through them, the functions of consciousness are evident. Worthy Protector, it is like a mechanism which enables a wooden machine to perform various kinds of tasks, whether talking, leaping, jumping, or dancing. What is your opinion? By whose power is this wooden machine enabled to work?"

Worthy Protector replied to the Buddha, "My wisdom and knowledge are too shallow to determine this."

The Buddha told Worthy Protector, "We should know that it is by the power of performance. The power for performing deeds is formless but directed by intelligence. Thus, a body-machine can do things with the power of consciousness. [Rsis](#), [gandharvas](#), dragons, humans, [asuras](#), and others all depend on it to perform various kinds of deeds. [ālaya] consciousness can form the body as a work machine. Consciousness, without any form or mass, has the mental power to hold the dharma realm. It can know events even in one's past lives. By analogy, the pervasive sunlight shines equally on sentient beings with evil karma, corpses, impure things, and stinking things, but it is not defiled by them. [ālaya] consciousness is the same way. Although it is in the body of a pig or a dog that eats impure things or of one trekking the evil life-journeys, it is not defiled.

"Worthy Protector, [ālaya] consciousness abandons this body and moves away to accept the next requital according to good or evil karma. By analogy, when the wind element exits a remote mountain or steep gorge and sweeps across a forest of fragrant [campaka](#) trees, it carries fragrance. When it sweeps across a place of feces, corpses, stench, and filth, the wind carries a stench. When it passes through both places, it carries both fragrance and stench. The stronger scent will be manifested first. Wind has no mass, and scent has no shape. Yet wind can carry both fragrance and stench afar. Likewise, consciousness abandons this body, carrying good and evil karmas, to accept the next requital. It is just like the wind carrying fragrance and stench to another location. It is also like the dreamer who sees myriads of images and does various kinds of deeds in a dream but is unaware that he is sleeping. When a virtuous person dies, the transference of his [ālaya] consciousness is peaceful and unconscious, in the same way as his going somewhere in a dream without any fear. The exit of [ālaya] consciousness is not through one's throat, mouth, or other orifices. Its exit and route are unknowable."

At that time the youth Worthy Protector Superior bowed down at the feet of the Buddha. He asked the Buddha, "Where does [ālaya] consciousness enter the embryo inside the egg of a chicken or goose, the shell of which is dense? If the embryo dies within the egg and if the eggshell has no crack or hole, where will [ālaya] consciousness exit?"

The Buddha replied to Worthy Protector, "By analogy, if black sesame seeds are processed with campaka flowers, the oil will become aromatic and be called campaka oil. It is far superior to ordinary sesame oil. The oil initially does not contain any aroma but becomes aromatic after the seeds have been processed with the flowers. The fragrance does not crack the sesame seeds in order to enter or to exit, nor does it leave any substance in the oil. However, because of the force of causes and conditions, the aroma is blended into the oil and the oil becomes aromatic. The way [ālaya] consciousness moves into or out of the



embryo of a chicken or a goose in spite of the eggshell is like the transference of campaka fragrance into the oil. The transference of [ālaya] consciousness is like the flow of sunlight, the shine of a jewel, or the fire from firewood.

"[Ālaya] consciousness is also like a seed. When a seed is planted in the ground of transformation, sprout, seedling, stem, and leaves will successively appear above the ground. Then flowers in a variety of colors—white, off-white, or red—may appear, and fruits in a variety of flavors may ripen. The same great earth, supported equally by the other elements, grows different things according to the seeds. Thus, the dharma realm of one's [ālaya] consciousness will [successively] produce bodies in black, white, yellow, or red, with various kinds of characters whether gentle or violent, to undergo life and death. Worthy Protector, consciousness has neither hands nor feet, nor joints nor speech. In the dharma realm, the power of memory is strong. After a sentient being dies and [ālaya] consciousness abandons the current body, [ālaya] consciousness, with the power of memory, is the seed for the next life. Apart from consciousness, there is no dharma realm; apart from dharma realm, there is no consciousness. [ālaya] consciousness and its dharma realm move away, together with [the karmic] wind, the realm of subtle memory, and the realm of sensory reception."

Worthy Protector further asked the Buddha, "If so, why does World-Honored One say that consciousness is formless?"

The Buddha said, "Worthy Protector, there are two kinds of form, the internal and the external. Eye consciousness is internal, and eye is external. In the same way, ear consciousness is internal, and ear is external; nose consciousness is internal, and nose is external; tongue consciousness is internal, and tongue is external; body consciousness is internal, and body is external. Worthy Protector, a person who is blind by birth dreams of a beautiful woman, and he sees clearly her hands, feet, and beautiful features. He loves the sights as he dreams. When the night's sleep is over and daylight arrives, the blind man describes to a crowd the pleasing things in his dream, saying, 'I saw a beautiful woman whose features were uniquely exquisite, a garden with lush flowers, and hundreds and thousands of well-adorned people, who frolicked merrily. Their skin was lustrous, their shoulders were plump, and their arms were long and rounded like an elephant trunk. I gained great happiness from my dream, and my heart was gladdened.' Worthy Protector, this man was born blind, who has never seen anything with his eyes. Why can he perceive sights in his dream?"

Worthy Protector replied, "I pray that you will indicate the reason."

The Buddha told Worthy Protector, "The way one sees in a dream is called the inner eye, which differentiates, not through the physical eye, but with

intellect. The inner eye manifests temporarily in the blind man's dream because of the power of memory. He also recalls the dream with the power of memory. The internal visions produced by consciousness are the same way.

"Furthermore, Worthy Protector, the transference of consciousness upon one's death is like a seed discarded on the ground. With the support of the four great elements, it gradually transforms into seedling, stem, branches, and leaves. One's consciousness is supported by memory, receptiveness, goodness, and evil. By analogy, a crystal jewel placed alongside something black or white will appear black or white. Likewise, consciousness supported by good or evil karma will transfer somewhere to receive a corresponding requital, good or evil."

Worthy Protector next asked the Buddha, "Where does the body hold consciousness?"

The Buddha replied, "Worthy Protector, consciousness neither accumulates nor gathers, nor does it grow. [The development of consciousness in an embryo], by analogy, is like the birth of a sprout. The sprout is born neither before the seed is transformed nor after the seed is destroyed. However, as the sprout appears, the seed is spent. Worthy Protector, what is your opinion? Where does the sprout stay? In the seed, the stem, the branches, the leaves, or the top of the tree?"

Worthy Protector replied to the Buddha, "No, World-Honored One, the sprout stays nowhere."

[The Buddha continued,] "Indeed, Worthy Protector, [ālaya] consciousness does not stay in a particular place in the body, not in the eye, ear, nose, or the tongue. A seed giving birth to a sprout is likened to consciousness becoming dimly aware [in an embryo]. The formation of flower buds is likened to consciousness becoming receptive. The stage from blossoming of flowers to bearing of fruits is likened to [ālaya] consciousness forming a body. The way [ālaya] consciousness forms a body is throughout all parts of the body. However, one cannot find where consciousness stays. Without [ālaya] consciousness, the body cannot be formed.

"For example, only a ripe fruit, not an unripe fruit, from a tree is capable of releasing the seed for a new tree to come. Likewise, when one's [current] requital is withered, one dies and the [ālaya] consciousness-seed appears. Because of consciousness, there is sensory reception; because of sensory reception, there is love. Bondage to love produces memory. [ālaya] consciousness holds memory and follows good and evil karmas and the wind element. It also thinks of its parents-to-be and selects those who match the causes and conditions. For example, the reflection of one's face does not appear

in a mirror if the mirror is not clean or clear. If the mirror is clear, the reflection appears. The image in the mirror has no sensation or thinking, but it follows the person to stretch or bend, to face upward or downward, to open the mouth to speak or joke, to walk or stand, performing various kinds of motion. Worthy Protector, by what force does the reflection appear in a mirror?"

Worthy Protector replied to the Buddha, "It is by the decision of the person. Because of his face, there is its reflection. The form of the reflected image is just like that of the person's face. Its sense organs, whether complete or incomplete, are just like those on his face."

The Buddha said, "The person's face is the cause of the reflection, and the mirror is the condition of the reflection. The reflection appears because of the convergence of causes and conditions. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness is the cause for sensory reception, perception, mental processing, and mental functions, and the parents are the conditions. As the causes and conditions come together, a body appears[, like the reflection in the mirror]. As for the person and the mirror [in the example], when the person moves away, his mirror reflection is also gone. The person may cast his reflection elsewhere, perhaps in the water. Likewise, after [ālaya] consciousness abandons this body, it holds good and evil karmas and moves away to accept the next requital.

"It is also like the seed of the banyan tree or the ficus tree. Although it is a small seed, it can grow a huge tree. The tree again bears seeds. The seed then abandons the old tree to grow a new tree. As the old tree grows weak, in time, with its juice exhausted, it will dry out and decay. However, the small seed grows a tree of the same kind. When [ālaya] consciousness abandons the body, it may ride its karma to accept a huge body, which may be any of various kinds. It is also like various other kinds of seeds such as barley, wheat, sesame, mung bean, and legume. Because a seed is planted, sprout, stem, flowers, and fruits will grow and ripen. As [ālaya] consciousness has transferred into a sentient being of a certain type, it has awareness, which leads to sensory reception.

"Thus, [ālaya] consciousness holds good and evil karmas to accept successively a variety of bodies. It is also like a bee which stops over a flower. With love, pleasure, and attachment, it sucks the flavor of the flower to stock up nourishment. The bee then abandons this flower to seek other flowers at other places. Whether it abandons fragrance for stench, whether it abandons stench for fragrance, it cannot help loving and coveting the object it stops over. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness may acquire a celestial body to enjoy pleasure fruit because of meritorious karma. It may then abandon the celestial body to enter hell to accept misery fruit because of evil karma. As [saṃsāra](#) turns, various kinds of bodies are [successively] formed.

"Consciousness is like the white seed of a red or blue tulip or a [pundarika](#) blossom. If one cracks open the seed, one will not find any sprout or flower, nor a different color. Only if the seed is planted in the ground and watered, will a sprout grow. In time flowers and fruits will thrive and flourish, with the flowers blooming in red or white or various colors. The sprout and the color of the flowers are not inside the seed. Without the seed, nothing can be born. [ālaya] consciousness abandons a dead body, including its fleshy frame, facial features, sense organs, and sense faculties, because it no longer sees the convergence of their causes and conditions. With its power of memory and its wonderful vision, hearing, smelling, tasting, and tactility, [ālaya] consciousness knows the good and evil karmas one has created, according to which it will accept a requital body. As a silk worm constructs a cocoon, binding itself by its own doing, transference of consciousness is the same way. [ālaya] consciousness constructs a body to bind itself. Once it abandons a body, it will go to accept the next requital [through a new body]. Because of a flower seed, there will be colors and fragrance of flowers. Likewise, after [ālaya] consciousness has abandoned a body, wherever it goes, along with it go the dharma realms of sense faculties, sensory reception, and mental objects. Wherever a wish-fulfilling jewel is, it is accompanied by pleasing objects. Wherever the sun is, it is accompanied by bright light. Likewise, wherever consciousness transfers to, it is accompanied by the dharma realms of sensory reception and perception. Matter is the substance of a body, including its sense organs. After abandoning a body, [ālaya] consciousness, without a body of flesh and bones, carries with it all the necessities. It has wonderful memory and knows how to grasp the good or evil.

"Various kinds of fruits, such as dates, pomegranates, mangoes, and the like, may taste pungent, bitter, sour, sweet, salty, or tart. With a distinct flavor, each fruit may serve a different purpose. After the fruit decays, its flavor will find another life through the transformation of the seed. Thus, as the [ālaya] consciousness-seed transfers, it is accompanied by sensory reception, thinking, and good and evil karmas. It is called consciousness because it knows that it has abandoned the current body in order to accept the next requital body. It is called consciousness because it knows that it is accompanied by good and evil karmas and that, holding these karmas, it transfers to accept [the next] requital. It is called consciousness because it knows all about what the body does. By analogy, the wind element has no form to grasp and no mass to hold, but, through causes and conditions, it can perform deeds. Wind can carry cold or hot, carry fragrance or stench, shake the woods, or violently devastate anything in its way. Likewise, consciousness has no shape or mass, and cannot be detected by sight or hearing. However, through causes and condition, the appearance of consciousness is revealed. Because consciousness holds the body, the body knows pain or pleasure. Looking radiant and energetic, one's body can walk or stand, speak or laugh, and feel happy or sad. Seeing clearly the deeds performed, we should know that there is consciousness.

## Fascicle 2 (of 2)

At that time in the assembly, the youth Worthy Protector rose from his seat and joined his palms. He asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, how to see the cause of form? How to see the cause of desire? How to see the cause of perception? How to see the cause of grasping moral precepts?"

The Buddha told Worthy Protector, "The wise ones see objects wisely, and the foolish ones see objects foolishly. When the wise ones see an attractive body, they understand that it is filth, only an assemblage of flesh bundles, tendons, bones, membranes, pus, secretion, and blood, with large veins, small veins, and hollow and solid organs such as large intestine, small intestine, bladder, stomach, spleen, gall bladder, liver, brain, heart, kidneys, and lungs, as well as hair and nails. Also wrapped in a thin skin are abominable, disgusting impure discharges such as bile, phlegm, mucus, saliva, feces, and urine.

"A form is composed of the four great elements, which are the cause of form. Moon Reality, taking the body born from parents as an example, its solidity is the earth element; its moisture is the water element; its warmth is the fire element; and its motion is the wind element. Its realms of perception and thinking, as well as the realms of sounds, scents, tastes, and tactile sensations, are all consciousness."

The youth Moon Reality next asked the Buddha, "How does one's consciousness abandon the current body upon its dying? How does consciousness transfer into the next body? How does it know to abandon this body now?"

The Buddha told Moon Reality, "A sentient being receives requital according to karma, and the stream of consciousness continuously maintains each requital body. Upon the exhaustion of requital, a term of life is ended and one's [ālaya] consciousness abandons the body. It then moves to accept [the next body] according to karma. Using watery milk as an example, when it is heated with fire, milk and fat will separate. Thus, Moon Reality, when the lifespan of a sentient being ends, because of dissolution of the karmic force, the body, consciousness, and the realm of senses and their objects all separate from one another. [ālaya] consciousness then carries the dharma realm of thinking and memory as well the good and evil karmas to go to accept the next requital.

"Moon Reality, taking the highly auspicious good nectar for example, when nectar is blended with the flavors and healing power of good medicine, it turns into the highly auspicious good nectar. Shedding its ordinary quality, the nectar now holds the strength of good medicine with six flavors: pungent, bitter, sour, salty, tart, and sweet. With its colors, scents, and flavors, it can benefit the

human body. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness, after abandoning the body, holding good and evil karmas and the dharma realm, moves away to accept the next requital. Moon Reality, the substance of the nectar is like one's body. Blending medicine with the nectar, turning it into the highly auspicious good nectar is like objects and senses being joined to create karma. The medicine and its flavors constituting the nectar are like karma stocked in consciousness. When one takes the highly auspicious good nectar, one will look robust, energetic, radiant, fine, and peaceful, without any trouble. It is like receiving pleasure requital because consciousness is stocked with good karma. If one takes nectar made with the wrong medicine, one's features will turn grim, without healthy colors, pale like the dead. It is like receiving misery retribution because consciousness is laden with evil karma.

"Moon Reality, nectar does not have hands, feet, or eyes, but it can incorporate the strength of the colors, scents, and flavors of good medicine. In the same way, consciousness can hold good karma and the dharma realm of sensory reception. After it has abandoned the current body, it acquires in the intermediate state the wonderful celestial vision. It can see the six desire heavens and sixteen hells. It can see its body with shapely hands and feet and fine sense organs. It also can see the abandoned corpse and recognize it as the body of its former life. It can also see tall magnificent celestial palaces with various kinds of sublimity, surrounded by flowers, fruits, and trees, and covered with vines so radiant and gorgeous that they are like ornamental gold chains and jewels. Having seen these things, it will be very joyous. Because of attraction and love, [ālaya] consciousness will entrust itself to this [environment]. When a person with good karma abandons his body to assume another body, it will be peaceful and painless. It is like a horseman abandoning one horse to ride another. It is like a warrior armed with military strategy. When the enemy troops arrive, he puts on his sturdy armor and fearlessly rides off on his steed. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness, supported with good roots, abandons the inhalation and exhalation of this body as well as its senses, to go elsewhere to experience fabulous pleasures, assuming a celestial body as a god in a heaven, from [Brahma](#) Heaven up to the [topmost heaven](#)."

At that time in the assembly, the prince Great Medicine rose from his seat and joined his palms. He asked the Buddha, "What form and image does consciousness assume after it has abandoned its body?"

The Buddha said, "Very good! Very good! Great Medicine, what you now ask is in the great, profound realm of the Buddha. Except for the Tathāgata, no one can understand."

Then the youth Worthy Protector Superior said to the Buddha, "Prince Great Medicine's question is very profound. His wisdom is wonderful, keen, and



brilliant."

The Buddha told Worthy Protector, "This prince Great Medicine has planted his good roots under Vipāśyin Buddha. He was reborn for 500 lives in non-Buddhist families. When he was a non-believer, he often pondered the meaning of consciousness—what consciousness is and why it is consciousness. For 500 lives, he was unable to solve his problem, unable to find clues as to the coming and going of consciousness. I will today shatter his net of doubt and make him understand."

Then the youth Worthy Protector Superior said to the prince Great Medicine, "Very good! Very good! What you now ask is subtle and profound. The meaning of Moon Reality's questions is shallow and narrow, like a child whose mind roams amid external objects, not knowing the inner realm. It is rare to hear the true Dharma and is hard to encounter the Buddha, whose perfect, vast knowledge is unimaginable. We should especially ask Him for the utmost wondrous principles of profound wisdom."

At that time the prince Great Medicine, seeing the Buddha's radiant and pleasant features like an opening autumn lotus blossom, was exuberant and joyful. He joined his palms single-mindedly and said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, I love the profound Dharma and I thirst for the profound Dharma. I always have the fear of the Tathāgata entering nirvāṇa and of my not hearing the true Dharma. Then I would have to be among the sentient beings in the world of the [five turbidities](#), too ignorant to know good versus evil, too ignorant to be aware of the wholesome versus the unwholesome and of maturity versus immaturity [of karma]. I would have to transmigrate in confusion, suffering through the journeys of life and death."

The Buddha told the prince Great Medicine, "The true Dharma of the Tathāgata is hard to encounter and hard to acquire. In a past life, for the sake of half a stanza [of teachings], I climbed up a mountain and plunged down, abandoning my life. For the sake of the true Dharma, I have undergone immeasurable millions of [kotis](#) of various kinds of sufferings and tribulations. Great Medicine, you may ask all the questions that you desire. I will explicate them to you."

The prince Great Medicine said to the Buddha, "Affirmatively I accept your teachings. World-Honored One, what is the appearance of consciousness? I pray that you will grant me an explanation."

The Buddha told Great Medicine, "It is like a person's reflection in the water. It cannot be grasped because it is neither existent nor nonexistent. It is like the shape of a cloud, like the imagery of thirsty love."

The prince Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "What is thirsty love?"

The Buddha replied, "When one's eyes follow a pleasing sight, it is called thirsty love. When one holds a mirror, one sees the reflection of one's face. When the face in front of the mirror is gone, so is its reflection. The transference of [ālaya] consciousness is the same way. Neither the appearance of consciousness nor the shape of good and evil karmas can be seen. Just as a person who is born blind does not know sunrise, sunset, night, day, light, or dark, likewise we cannot see consciousness. Nor can thirsty love, sensory reception, or perception be seen in one's body. The great elements, sense faculties, and the aggregates, composing the body, are all consciousness. The physical eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, together with sights, sounds, scents, tastes, and tactile sensations, as well as the nonphysical mind of sensation, suffering, and pleasure, are all consciousness. Great Medicine, for example, one tastes food with one's tongue to detect all six flavors: sweet, bitter, pungent, sour, salty, and tart. The tongue and the food have a shape and form, but the flavors are shapeless. One experiences sensations because of the body with its bones, marrows, flesh, and blood. The body has a shape, but sensations are without a shape or form. In the same way one can know consciousness as well as the fortune fruit or misfortune fruit it holds."

At that time the youth Worthy Protector Superior bowed down at the feet of the Buddha and said, "World-Honored One, can one know consciousness as well as its fortune fruit or misfortune fruit?"

The Buddha said, "Hearken well! No one can see consciousness without first seeing the truth. Unlike a mango in one's palm, consciousness cannot be seen. Consciousness is not inside one's organs such as the eye. If consciousness were inside one's organs such as the eye, one would be able to see it by dissecting the eye. Worthy Protector, Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges all see that consciousness is formless, and I also see that consciousness is formless. Consciousness cannot be seen by the ordinary and the foolish. It can be revealed only by analogy. Worthy Protector, to know sin or merit held in consciousness, you now should hearken. Suppose a person is possessed, whether by a deity such as gandharva or by a spirit such as skandha. Worthy Protector, what is your opinion? Can one see the possessor, a deity or a spirit, of a body?"

Worthy Protector replied to the Buddha, "No, World-Honored One, the possessor, a deity or a spirit, inside a body is without form or shape. One cannot see it inside or outside the body."

[The Buddha continued,] "Worthy Protector, if someone is possessed by a great deity with superb merit, that person will receive nice fragrant flowers,

choice incense, and aromatic fine food and drink served properly, with handsome clean offering paraphernalia. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness stocked with merit will receive [fortune] fruit in the form of dignity, peace, and happiness, whether as a king among men, a state minister, a nobleman with reputation, a person in command of wealth, an elder, a merchant lord, or a god who enjoys splendid celestial life. Consciousness stocked with merit, enabling the body to receive pleasure requital, is just like a good deity taking possession of a person. When the deity receives an offering of supremely wonderful flowers, incense, and aromatic, fine food and drink, he will be delighted and the possessed patient will be soothed. Therefore, if a person acquires command of rank and wealth in life, we should know that, because his consciousness is stocked with merit, his body is enjoying pleasure fruit.

"Worthy Protector, if someone is possessed by a sordid evil spirit such as [pūtana](#), which loves feces, spit, rot, filth, and impure things, offering these to its pleasure will suit that person. Because of the power of the spirit, the possessed patient follows its desires and loves impurity, stench, rot, and feces. Likewise, if [ālaya] consciousness is laden with sin, one will be reborn [as a human] in poverty or will undertake an evil life-journey of some kind, as a hungry ghost or an animal that eats filthy things.

"Worthy Protector, a superior deity, formless and shapeless, taking possession of a body, receives various kinds of fragrant and pure offerings. Likewise, one's [ālaya] consciousness stocked with meritorious karma receives pleasure requital. On the other hand, an evil spirit such as pūtana, possessing a body, receives impure, filthy, gross food and drink. Likewise, one's [ālaya] consciousness laden with sinful karma receives misery retribution. Worthy Protector, we should know that a body possessed by a deity or a spirit receiving fine or gross food and drink is just like one receiving pleasure or misery requital from merit or sin stocked [in consciousness]."

The prince Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, how to see the cause of desire?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, desire is born from complementary causes, just like two pieces of wood rubbed against each other by human power to produce fire. Thus desire is born from consciousness as well as from male and female forms, together with sight, sound, scent, taste, and touch. As an analogy, fruit is born from flower. However, there is no fruit in a flower. When the fruit is born, the flower has perished. Although consciousness is evident because of the body, it cannot be seen by searching throughout the body. When the [seed for the next] karmic fruit is born in consciousness, the body perishes. Bones, marrow, and impure things will all decompose along with the body.

"Another example is a seed which, holding the color, aroma, flavor, and feel of the future fruit, leaves the tree to grow. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness abandons the current body, holding good and evil karmas, sensory reception, perception, and attention, to accept the next life as requital. It is also like the pleasure meeting of love and desire between a man and a woman who will then go separate ways. Consciousness, joined with karma, engages in love, attachment, play, craving, stinginess, and greed. When one karmic requital is exhausted, consciousness will accept the next requital according to karma. With the conditions of the parents matched during the intermediate state [after one's death], karmic force will enable [ālaya] consciousness to acquire a body[, the karmic] fruit. Love and karma are both without shape or mass. Desire and forms are the complementary causes for desire to arise. These are the cause of desire.

"Great Medicine, how to see the cause of grasping moral precepts? Precepts are stipulated by a master, such as not to kill, not to steal, not to have sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to take intoxicating substances. Grasping them means observance of these precepts with a [grasping] view that 'because of observance of these precepts, one would attain [holy fruits](#) such as śrotāpanna, śakradāgāmin, and Anāgāmin.' However, because of their grasping, they will instead gain a good rebirth, assuming a human body or a celestial body. This is goodness with discharges, not goodness without discharges, because goodness without discharges does not yield a fruit, a body, formed with the five aggregates. Therefore, grasping the precepts means planting an impure seed with discharges. Consciousness that holds both good and evil karmas is impure, and it undergoes the fire of sufferings because of afflictions. This is seeing the reason for grasping the precepts."

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "How does consciousness acquire a god's body or even a hell dweller's body?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, [ālaya] consciousness in the intermediate state holds subtle wonderful vision, which does not depend on the physical eye for sight. When this subtle vision serves a meritorious condition, it sees merrymaking with desire and pleasure in a celestial palace. Consciousness will then delight in and be attached to what it has seen, and will have the thought that 'I should go there.' Defiled love and attachment are the cause of becoming. When consciousness sees its dead body lying at the place for corpses, it will have the thought that 'this corpse is my beneficent knowledgeable friend. Because it accumulated the good deeds, I now will gain the heaven-reward.'"

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, since this consciousness loves the corpse, why does it not use it?"

The Buddha asked Great Medicine, "Taking the cut hair and beard as an

analogy, although they are still black and lustrous, can you plant them on the body to make them grow again?"

Great Medicine replied to the Buddha, "No, World-Honored One, the abandoned hair and beard cannot be planted on the body to make them grow again."

The Buddha said, "Indeed, Great Medicine, an abandoned corpse cannot be used by [ālaya] consciousness as the next requital."

Great Medicine further asked the Buddha, "Consciousness is invisible and subtle, without any mass or shape to find. How can it keep alive the large body of a sentient being such as an elephant or penetrate a body even if it is as hard as vajra? How does it hold the body of a strong man who can fight off nine elephants?"

The Buddha replied to Great Medicine, "The great wind element, without mass or shape, stays in a hidden valley or in a crevice. It can break out in violence, crushing Mount Sumeru to dust. Great Medicine, what are the form and appearance of the Sumeru destroyer wind?"

Great Medicine replied to the Buddha, "The wind element is subtle, without mass or shape."

The Buddha said, "Great Medicine, as the wind element is subtle, without any mass or shape, [ālaya] consciousness is the same way—subtle and without any mass or shape. However, it can hold a body whether small or large, whether of a mosquito or of an elephant. Just as a bright lamp removes darkness in a room whether large or small, so too consciousness holds a body whether large or small, according to karma."

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, what is the appearance of karma? Through what causes and conditions does it manifest?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, one's rebirth in a celestial palace to eat wonderful celestial food in peace and happiness is the appearance of karmic fruit. As an analogy, two thirsty people wander in wilderness. One of them acquires cool, good water, and the other finds nothing and has to experience thirst and suffering. One of them acquires cool water, not given by anyone; the other in thirst is not obstructed by anyone from finding water. Each undergoes requitals of pleasure or suffering according to karmic causes. Great Medicine, this is the way to see one's good or evil karma, like the two distinct phases of the moon in the sky, white or black. It is also like a ripening fruit, the color of which changes as the fire element escalates. Thus, a body, because of enrichment by

merit, is born into a noble family, with an outstanding appearance of excellence, abundant assets, and an overflow of gold and treasures. Or it may be born in a celestial palace to enjoy happiness and ease. These fortunate conditions are manifestations of good karma.

"As an analogy, a seed is planted in the ground, but fruits appear at the top of the tree. The seed does not go from branch to branch to reach the tree top, nor does anyone put the seed on a branch. Even if the tree is chopped down, one still cannot find the seed. The seed has disappeared when the tree is formed and its roots firm. Thus good and evil karmas are all manifested through the body. However, karma is not in the body, and the body is not in karma. As an analogy, the flower is caused by the seed, but inside the seed there is no flower. The fruit is caused by the flower, but inside the flower there is no fruit. As flower and fruit develop, one does not see the development. Likewise, because of body there is karma, and because of karma there is body. As the flower falls at maturity, the fruit with its seed will appear; as the body expires at maturity, the karmic seed will leave it. Just as the seed is the cause of flowers and fruit, so too is the body the cause of good and evil karmas. Karma has no shape, without the appearance of maturity, like the shadow of one's body, with neither mass nor obstruction. The shadow is not held by or fastened to a person, but it moves around with the person. Never has anyone seen the shadow coming out of one's body. Karma and body are the same way. There are body and karma, but karma cannot be seen as something attached to the body. Yet, without the body, there cannot be karma.

"As an analogy, medicine, which tastes pungent, bitter, or tart, can purge all diseases and make the body full of healthy color and radiance, and people will know on sight that [the patient] has taken good medicine. The flavor of medicine can be experienced, but its curative function is shapeless, cannot be seen, and cannot be grasped. However, it can improve a person's skin tone and glow. Likewise, good karma, which has no mass or shape, can enrich one's body. One who is fortified with good karma is endowed with food, drink, and an abundance of internal and external assets. One has good facial features and shapely, normal hands and feet, and lives in a luxurious house piled up with treasures such as jewels, gold, and silver, enjoying peace, happiness, and merriment at will. We should know that this is the appearance of good karma.

"On the other hand, if one is born with repulsive features, staying at a squalid place in a fringe country, in poverty and lowliness, subsisting on gross food and drink or having nothing to eat, lacking resources, and envying others' enjoyment, we should know that this is the appearance of evil karma. As a clear mirror displays the fineness and grossness of one's face, the reflection in the mirror has no mass and cannot be captured. As consciousness is stocked with good and evil karmas, accordingly one is reborn as a god or a human, or is



reborn as an animal or a hell dweller. Great Medicine, this is the way to see how karma and [ālaya] consciousness move away together."

Great Medicine asked, "World-Honored One, how can subtle consciousness support sense organs and acquire a large body?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, as an analogy, a hunter goes into a mountain forest and shoots an elephant with a poisonous arrow. The poison on the arrow enters the blood stream of the elephant's body. It disables the body and destroys its senses. The poison is lethal and the body turns blue-red like clotted blood. Having killed the elephant, the poison is spent. What is your opinion? How does the quantity of poison compare with the size of the elephant's body? Can they compare?"

Great Medicine replied to the Buddha, "The poison and the elephant have too wide a disparity to compare with respect to quantity or size. It is like comparing a mustard seed with Mount Sumeru. Great Medicine, likewise, [ālaya] consciousness abandons the current body and its realm and moves on to develop new sense faculties according to karma."

Great Medicine further asked the Buddha, "Why is the subtle consciousness not fatigued by holding a large body?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, Sumeru, the mountain-king, stands at 84,000 [yojanas](#). The two dragon-kings Nanda and Upānanda each circle it three times. They then shake Mount Sumeru with a huge breath, turning the waters of its surrounding sea into poison. These two dragon-kings are gigantic and strong, and the two dragon-kings Vāsuki and Takṣaka are their equals. What is your opinion? Is there any difference in quantity between the consciousness of any of the four dragon-kings and that of a mosquito?"

Great Medicine replied, "World-Honored One, there is no difference between the consciousness of any of the four dragon-kings and that of a mosquito."

"Great Medicine, if a small drop of deadly poison enters the mouth of each of the four dragons, they will all die. What is your opinion? Between a small drop of deadly poison and the venom in the mouth of a dragon, which is stronger?"

Great Medicine replied to the Buddha, "The venom in the dragon's mouth is stronger, and the strength of a small drop of poison is slight."

"Great Medicine, as a strong sentient being can fight off nine elephants, likewise the subtle [ālaya] consciousness, with neither form nor shape, not measurable by quantity, supports a body according to karma. Although the seed

of a banyan tree is tiny, after planting, it can grow into a magnificent huge tree with hundreds and thousands of branches. What is your opinion? Are the seed and the tree of the same size?"

Great Medicine replied, "World-Honored One, the seed and the tree have a vast difference in size, like that between a hole in the lotus root and the realm of space."

"Thus, Great Medicine, the tree cannot be found in the seed. Yet, without the seed, the tree cannot be born. Just as a tiny banyan seed can grow a huge tree, so too subtle [ālaya] consciousness can grow a huge body. One cannot find consciousness in the body. Yet, without [ālaya] consciousness, the body cannot be."

Great Medicine further asked the Buddha, "Why does consciousness, which is indestructible like an adamantine vajra, stay in a fragile quick-to-decay body?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, as an analogy, a poor man acquires a wish-fulfilling jewel. By the power of the jewel, resources and pleasure objects arrive spontaneously, such as ornately sculpted towers, splendid palatial mansions, lush gardens full of flowers and fruits, elephants and horses, and female attendants. Later, he loses the wish-fulfilling jewel, and all the resources and pleasure objects also vanish. Although the wish-fulfilling jewel is so strong and solid that it cannot be destroyed by a thousand vajras, the resources it produces, which quickly disperse and perish, are false and impermanent. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness is firm and indestructible, but the body it produces quickly decays and perishes."

Great Medicine asked, "World-Honored One, how does the subtle consciousness penetrate a dense hard form?"

The Buddha said to Great Medicine, "Water is a gentle substance, but its flow can penetrate mountain rocks. What is your opinion? How do you compare the quality of softness and hardness in water and rock?"

Great Medicine replied, "World-Honored One, the quality of a rock is hard like vajra. The quality of water is soft, pleasant to the touch."

"Great Medicine, Consciousness is the same way, most wondrous and most soft, but it can penetrate [an embryo which may become] a strong large body, moving inside to accept requital."

Great Medicine next asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, after sentient beings have abandoned their bodies, how are they reborn in heaven, and how

are they reborn in hell?"

The Buddha said to Great Medicine, "Upon the death of a person, if he has stored meritorious karma, he will abandon his original eyesight and acquire the wonderful celestial vision. With the wonderful celestial vision, he will see the six desire heavens, the six life-journeys, and the movement of his body. He sees celestial palaces with all amenities, and joyous gardens and flower gardens where flowers are always in bloom. He also sees, in the lotus hall, beautiful goddess attendants in merriment, wearing flowers and silk garments, adorned with bangles, bracelets, and other ornaments. Once he sees the goddess-daughters in heaven, his mind will be filled with happiness and gratification as well as attachment. His features become relaxed and joyful like a lotus blossom. His gaze is not disoriented, his nose not collapsed, and his breath not foul. His eyes look bright and clear like green lotus leaves. The joints of his body are not in pain. His eyes, ears, nose, and mouth do not ooze blood, nor does he lose control of feces or urine. His pores do not enlarge, nor does his hair stand on end. His palms are not dead yellow, and his nails not blue black. His hands and feet neither convulse nor contract. Good signs manifest to him as he sees a huge hall in the sky, lined with hundreds and thousands of colorful columns with beautiful carvings. The magnificent jeweled hall is decorated with various kinds of fragrant flowers, draped with nets from which hang bells playing beautiful refreshing tones to gentle winds. Frolicking in the hall are celestial youths adorned with jewels. Having seen these things, he will smile contentedly, showing his teeth like flowers in a painting. His eyes are neither wide open nor closed. His voice is soft, and his body, neither too cold nor too hot. He is not sad to see family members surrounding him. At sunrise, he abandons his life. Then he sees light, not dark, with extraordinary fragrances coming from the four directions. He might even see, with delight and reverence, the honored visage of a Buddha. He joyfully bids farewell as if to take a short trip. Then he returns to comfort his family and friends, helping them not to mourn the way existence flows, telling them not to have sorrow caused by differentiation, because where there is birth, there must be death. Great Medicine, a person with good karma, before his death, delights in giving alms, in reciting various stanzas and praises, and in understanding various explanations and teachings of the true Dharma. He abandons his life peacefully not in sleep but as if in sleep.

"As the person is about to abandon his life, his celestial parents-to-be are seated together on one seat. Flowers naturally appear in the hands of his goddess mother-to-be. Seeing these flowers, she says to his father-to-be, 'What an auspicious extraordinary victory fruit! You should know that a time is approaching for joyful celebration for a son.' His goddess mother-to-be then shakes the flowers with her hands. As she plays with the flowers, the person's life ends. His [ālaya] consciousness, formless and invisible, abandons all senses and their realms, carrying his karma and other realms, and moves away to

accept a different requital. It is like a horseman abandoning one horse to ride another. It is like the sun directing its light. It is like wood producing fire. It is like the moon casting its reflection in clear water. His [ālaya] consciousness stocked with good karma goes to accept a heaven-reward. It is swiftly delivered by [karmic] wind into a flower, and his celestial parents-to-be, seated together on one seat, both look at it. After the wind of desire blows sweet dew on the flower for seven days, a bright clean god-child, adorned with jewels, appears lively and radiant in the hands of his goddess-mother."

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, [ālaya] consciousness is shapeless. How does it produce a form through causes and conditions? Can a form be found inside its causes and conditions?"

The Buddha said to Great Medicine, "Before pieces of wood come into contact to produce fire, fire can not be found in wood. Without wood, fire cannot be produced. Fire is born from the coming together of causes and conditions. Without causes and conditions, fire cannot be born. Searching through wood, one cannot find the appearance of fire. Yet one can see fire rising from wood. Indeed, Great Medicine, [ālaya] consciousness produces a physical body through the parents as conditions. Searching through the physical body, one cannot find consciousness. Yet, apart from the physical body, there is no consciousness. Great Medicine, before the kindling of fire, the appearance of fire is not there. Nor are there such qualities as heat that can be felt. Thus, without a body, Great Medicine, there cannot be consciousness, sensory reception, perception, and mental processing. Great Medicine, when ordinary beings see the bright light of the sun, they do not see the substance of the sun, whether it is black, white, yellow white, or yellow red. They know only that the sun, alternately rising and setting, radiates light and heat. They know the sun through its functions. Consciousness too is known by its functions."

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "What are the functions of consciousness?"

The Buddha said to Great Medicine, "Sensory reception, perception, mental processing, thinking, and feeling anxiety, misery, or distress are the functions of consciousness. Furthermore, consciousness is also revealed by the awakening of seeds which have been conditioned by wholesome or unwholesome karmas."

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "How does [ālaya] consciousness leave one body and immediately accept another body? If it has abandoned one body but has not accepted a new body, what appearance does consciousness assume during this interval?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, as an analogy, a warrior with long

arms, donning tough armor, rides a horse, swift like the wind, into a battle formation, and fights bravely with his weapon. Although he falls off his horse in a moment of inattention, he immediately jumps back on because of his good training in martial arts. Likewise, [ālaya] consciousness abandons one body and immediately accepts another body. It is also like a coward who, upon seeing the enemy, out of fear, immediately rides his horse to escape. Likewise, when [ālaya] consciousness stocked with good karma sees its celestial parents seated together on the same seat, it quickly entrusts its rebirth to them.

"Great Medicine, you ask what appearance consciousness assumes during the interval after it has abandoned its old body but has not accepted its new body. Great Medicine, by analogy, a person's reflection in the water has no mass to grasp. Yet its hands, feet, facial features, and other shapes are not different from the person's. The reflection has no physical mass, nor does it perform deeds. It has neither sense of hot nor cold, nor other senses of touch. Nor does it fatigue or have flesh composed of the great elements. Nor does it make sounds of speech, sounds of body, or sounds of pain or pleasure. The appearance of [ālaya] consciousness is the same way, after it has abandoned the old body but has not accepted a new body. Great Medicine, the above explains how [ālaya] consciousness stocked with good karma is reborn in heaven."

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "How is [ālaya] consciousness reborn in hell?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, in regard to how those who have performed evil deeds enter hell, you should hearken. Great Medicine, sentient beings that have accumulated unwholesome roots have this thought upon dying: 'I now die here, with immense anxiety and suffering, abandoning my beloved parents, relatives, and friends.' They see hells and see themselves doomed to fall into them headfirst. They see a place covered with blood and relish its flavor on sight. Conditioned upon their mind's craving for blood, they are reborn in hell. The way [ālaya] consciousness deposits itself in the midst of such conditions as putrid evil water and stinking filth is analogous to the birth of maggots through the power of such conditions as feces, filth, spoiled cream, and putrid liquor, at a stinking place. Likewise those who enter hell are reborn there through foul things."

The youth Worthy Protector Superior joined his palms and asked the Buddha, "What forms and appearances do hell dwellers assume? What do their bodies look like?"

The Buddha said, "Great Medicine, those who are reborn in hell because of their love of blood-covered ground have bodies the color of blood, all radiating bloody light. Those who are reborn in a moat have bodies like black clouds.

Those who are reborn in a milk river have bodies dotted in various colors, and their bodies are very delicate, like an infant of nobility. Their body measures more than eight elbows in height, with long head hair and body hair trailing behind. Their hands, feet, and facial features are crooked and incomplete. People in Jambudvīpa will die if they see them in the distance."

Great Medicine asked the Buddha, "What food do hell dwellers eat?"

The Buddha replied, "Great Medicine, sentient beings in hell receive no pleasure from eating food. Running about with fear, they see in the distance red molten copper. Taking it for blood, they rush for it. They also hear a call saying that the hungry can come quickly to eat. They then go there and hold their hands as cups before their mouths. The hell warden pours hot molten copper into their cupped hands and forces them to drink it down into their abdomens. Their bones and joints burst and crack open, their bodies entirely in flames. Great Medicine, the food eaten by the sentient beings in hell only augments their sufferings, without affording even a little comfort or happiness. Such are the agonies of sentient beings in hell! However, their [ālaya] consciousness does not give up, nor is it damaged. Even when the body is like a pile of bones, [ālaya] consciousness remains there, not leaving. Until the karmic retribution is exhausted, the tormented body is not abandoned.

"Pressed by the agony of hunger and thirst, they see a lush green garden with an abundance of thriving trees, flowers, and fruits. Having seen this, they laugh and say to one another, 'This lush garden is green and the wind is cool.' The multitude hastens into the garden, seeking for a moment of pleasure. However, the tree leaves, flowers, and fruits all turn into knives and swords to hack and slash these sinners. While some of them are hit and their bodies cut in two, others scream as they run in the four directions. Wardens all mobilize, holding vajra clubs, iron clubs, iron axes, or iron rods. They bite their lips in wrath, their bodies bursting flames. Forbidding the sinners to leave the garden, they slash and batter these sinners, who experience these things because of their own karma. Chasing after the sinners, the wardens say to them, 'Where are you going? You can stay here. How can you escape, to the east or the west? This garden is adorned with your karma. Is it possible to leave?'

"Indeed, Great Medicine, sentient beings in hell undergo various kinds of sufferings. They die every seven days and are reborn again in hell. Because of the power of karma, they are like worker bees which return to their original place after collecting honey from flowers. Sentient beings with sinful karma are doomed to enter hell. As they begin to die, they see the death agents arrive, who lasso their necks and drive them. As if being captured by bandits, they experience immense suffering in body and mind as they enter vast darkness, wailing these words: 'Oh, oh! Disaster! Agony! I now abandon relatives, friends,



and various kinds of loves in Jambudvīpa, to enter hell. I now do not see the road to heaven but see wretched things. Like a silkworm which produces silk to bind itself to death, I am fettered by my own sinful karma. With a noose fastened around my neck, I am dragged and driven into hell.' Worthy Protector, such are the miserable appearances of sentient beings with sinful karma, being reborn in hell!"

At that time Worthy Protector and the prince Great Medicine, having heard these words, were astounded, their hair standing on end. They rose together, joined their palms, and said, "We today take refuge under the Buddha and request His rescue and protection. We pray that, because of the virtue of hearing this Dharma, before we are liberated from the stream of existence on the wheel of life and death, we will not go down to the three evil life-paths, never into hell."

Worthy Protector next asked the Buddha, "I have a request. I pray only that you will grant it." The Buddha said, "You may ask anything you wish."

Worthy Protector asked the Buddha, "What is accumulation? What is gathering? What are the aggregates? What is the meaning of no-transference?"

The Buddha replied, "Worthy Protector, the body includes four realms: intellect, perception, mental base, and learning. These four realms of consciousness are called accumulation. Gathering refers to the six realms and six sense organs. The latter have six objects. There are three causes of existence in the Three Realms, and there are two causes for entrance [into the Way].

"Gathering means the assemblage of hair, beard, nails, skin, flesh, pus, blood, mucus, saliva, bile, phlegm, secretion, fat, marrow, and fluids, as well as hands, feet, face, and large and small joints. It is called gathering because it is just like grain, legume, sesame, and wheat, collected and amassed into large piles. The six realms include earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness. The six sense organs are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mental base, [the seventh consciousness]. Their corresponding objects are sights, sounds, scents, flavors, tactile sensations, and mental objects. The causes of existence in the Three Realms are greed, anger, and delusion. However, wind, bile, and phlegm are called the three causes [for diseases]. The two spiritual causes are precepts and faith; another two are equability and almsgiving; another two are energetic progress and samādhī; and another two are wholesomeness and unwholesomeness.

"Sensory reception, perception, mental processing, and consciousness are called the four formless aggregates. Sensory reception leads to experiencing the appearance of pain, pleasure, or neither of the two. Perception refers to

cognition of the appearance of pain or pleasure. Mental processing refers to thinking, attention, and making contact. Consciousness is the lord of the body, pervading the entire body and directing all of its activities. No-transference pertains to one who has attained the bodhi fruit because one's body, speech, and mind are purified. After this person has died, his [ālaya] consciousness abandons the aggregates of existence, moving away joyfully. It no longer undergoes another existence, to transmigrate via life-journeys. No more transference [into a karmic body] is called no-transference."

Then Worthy Protector and the prince Great Medicine bowed down at the feet of the Buddha and said, "World-Honored One, this Dharma nugget pronounced by the Buddha, the omniscient one, will bring great benefits, peace, and joy to sentient beings in the future."

The Buddha said, "The Dharma [store](#) of the Tathāgata is eternally abiding, never ceasing. The omniscient one knows it all, but He does not develop it. I have accumulated the wisdom light through immeasurable assiduousness and hardship. I now pronounce this Sūtra on this true-Dharma day to shine brilliant light on sentient beings and to let virtue and honor flow universally from the ocean of omniscience. I pronounce it for the sake of those who are able to control their mind streams. Where this Sūtra is, whether you recite it or explain it, gods, spirits, asuras, and mahoragas will all come to make obeisance and to support you. Water, fire, law, and bandits will not be able to do any harm. Bhikṣus, from this day forward, do not pronounce this Sūtra to non-believers. Nor should you show it to those who intend to find fault with this Sūtra. Nor should you pronounce it to heretics such as [Nirgrantha-putra](#) and the Nirgrantha group. Nor should you pronounce it to those who do not request it with respect. Those who disobey my instructions cause damage to the Dharma work. They in effect cause damage to the Tathāgata as well. Bhikṣus, if there are those who make obeisance and offerings to this Sūtra, you should respect them and honor them with gifts because they are in effect upholding the Tathāgata store."

At that time the World-Honored One spoke in verse:

"Be brave to transcend the burden of afflictions.  
Arduously train in the true teachings of the Buddha.  
Annihilate the legions of death,  
Like the elephant trampling on reeds.  
Uphold the Dharma, observe the precepts,  
And progress single-mindedly, without negligence or indolence  
So as to cease the flow of rebirth,  
Reaching the edge of miserable existence."

After the Buddha had pronounced this Sūtra, the youth Worthy Protector Superior, the prince Great Medicine, bhikṣus, and Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, as well as gods, humans, asuras, gandharvas, and others in the huge assembly, having heard the Buddha's words, rejoiced and reverently carried out the teachings.

**—*Mahāyāna Sūtra of Consciousness Revealed***  
**Translated from the Chinese Canon, Vol. 12, Text no. 347**